THEN and NOW!

By Frances H. Paulette

PART 2 - AND SHE WAS NUMBER TWO

It was going to be a nice quiet evening; Evelyn Alexander Warch was looking forward to watching one of her favorite televison programs. There had been little time for relaxation the past few weeks.

Though time-consuming and often filled with frustration, to say the least, the seemingly endless search for her family had proved to be fruitless. Evelyn was looking forward to meeting her sister and two half-sisters; she had already met her aunt. It was a good feeling, having "blood kin", no reflection on her adoptive parents, of course! They had been wonderful parents and she was going to miss them.

As she was getting settled to watch the ABC show, "About Faces" with Ben Alexander (no relation!) as host, a friend came over and decided to stay and watch with her.

"About Faces" was the kind of show that brought long-separated friends or families together, situations such as Evelyn's case.

"That's it!" exclaimed Evelyn's friend as the show began, "that's the answer, don't you see?" Noticing that Evelyn had not caught on to what she meant, she continued, "You want to get together with your sisters but you just don't have the money to go see them or have them come here. Why not write to the show and let them arrange it?"

Even though the possibility of getting together with her family at the expense and trouble of someone else was enough to gladden her heart, she didn't seem too interested. After all, what chance did she have?

"I wouldn't waste a stamp on writing that show," Evelyn said. "They wouldn't answer me anyway; I am just 'plain ordinary folks' and they wouldn't be interested in me."

"Aw, come on . . ." her friend insisted, "You write the letter to the TV Show and I'll provide the stamp."

"O.K., I'll do it" said Evelyn, "After all what have I got to lose but a few minutes of my time?"

Evelyn wrote a letter explaining in detail two she had very recently learned that she had a family that, until now, she had not known existed. She was most anxious to find and to get to know her sisters, but plane tickets cost money and she was a little bit short of that! The letter was mailed.

In three days Evelyn received a telegram telling her to call, collect, a number in California. Three more days passed, another call was made. The next correspondence was a letter containing plane tickets for Evelyn and her granddaughter, Sue Ellen Thayer, age three years. Evelyn had been careful to explain in the phone call that she was rearing her granddaughter and should she be asked to make the trip from Baltimore, Md. to California, the granddaughter, out of necessity would accompany her.

The fairy-tale quality of what was to follow began when Evelyn and her granddaughter were met at the airport in California by a chauffeur-driven limousine. Such elegance was new to Evelyn, but she liked it! Oh, how she did like it!

Since Evelyn and her granddaughter had flown first-class, they were showered with attention, of course. One such attention was the serving of alcoholic beverages, but Evelyn didn't drink. There was a gentleman, (such a nice one, too!), sitting nearby and he had been attentive to little Sue and Evelyn.

She noticed that he seemed to enjoy the drinks very much so she decided to offer him her drink. He graciously accepted.

When the time came for them to leave the plane the gentleman offered to carry Sue for Evelyn; she gladly accepted. Following the gentleman down the steps, she noticed quite a few people who seemed to be waiting for someone. That 'someone' was the gentleman holding Sue.

"That's funny," thought Evelyn, "Since the first time I saw him I have had the feeling that I have seen him somewhere before."

Suddenly the full impact of his identity hit her with a shocking force. "Of course," she said, to anyone who happened to be listening, "He's Jack Benny!" She was absolutely correct!

Evelyn and Sue were driven to one of the finest hotels in all of Los Angeles; all expenses paid by the show. The accomodations were far more luxurious than Evelyn had imagined.

Officials of the show were careful to see that Evelyn did not leave the hotel except to go to the studio for rehearsals. It was necessary for Sue to accompany her on these visits. When time came for Evelyn to rehearse her part she noticed that Sue was talking to a lovely lady with a beautiful, big dog. (It was funny, but that lady looked familiar, too!) The lady offered to hold Sue and let her continue to enjoy playing with the dog. Sue scrambled up on the lap of the lady, completely unaware that she was being held by none other than Connie Francis!

As Evelyn rehearsed her part in the show, little did she know that backstage out of sight and hearing, were two of her three sisters; each of the three completely unaware of the presence of the others.

Showtime was an unforgetable experience! Evelyn was put in an isolation booth and questioned by the MC; her sisters were, in turn, questioned. Then they met!

When Evelyn, from Baltimore, Md., and Miriam, all the way from Kansas City, Mo., met, they recognized each other immediately as having been classmates in school.

"Oh, No!" scramed Evelyn.

"You, of all people!" retorted Miriam, laughingly.

Ben Alexander asked, "Do you two know each other?"

"Do we know each other?" said Evelyn, "I couldn't stand that dumb thing when we were in school!" Laughing and crying with joy and disbelief, she remembered all the times that Miriam had been the cause of her getting caught in some of her mischief. It had seemed while in school they had continually 'had it in' for each other!

On one occasion, Evelyn had been suspended from school for five days for smoking in the bathroom. Who reported her? Miriam, of course! It seemed that every single time Evelyn played hooky from school Miriam found out and reported her. They had quite a time!

The show was just the beginning of an exciting time; Evelyn, her granddaughter, and sister Miriam visited in California for two weeks following the show; Sister Lorraine already lived there. She had worked in a secretarial position in the offices of Bing Crosby, so naturally Evelyn and Miriam were anxious to meet him. Not only did Evelyn meet him but he gave Evelyn a hug; it was with reluctance that Evelyn washed her arm! It was indeed a memory-making two weeks.

Evelyn has two children by her first husband, Warch; a son, Larry who is a patrolman with the Police Canine Corp in Baltimore, Md. and a daughter, Marjorie Warch Raitzyk who owns and operates an appliance store in Baltimore. Evelyn is justly proud of her two grandsons and one granddaughter.

Warch died in 1960 of cancer; Evelyn later met and married Joe Case of Appomattox; he died on March 19, 1975. On April 11, 1976 Evelyn married Donald Roach of Appomattox, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Roach of Pamplin.

A tiny woman with boundless energy, Evelyn worked until very recently as cashier at Revco Drug here in Appomattox. She is remembered for the exceptionally efficient manner in which she served customers.

In addition to making rugs, reading, doing cross-word puzzles, growing indoor plants, Evelyn enjoys her CB radio. Her handle is "Mama Duck" and she is known for 'cracking down' on truck drivers who use foul language as they travel through the area. "Little, but loud" is probably just how some of the truckers would describe "Mama Duck" as she tells them in no uncertain terms' that young people and children may be listening and to 'mind your tongue!'

Maybe it is because, after rearing her family, she reared from infancy, her granddaughter Sue or maybe she is just 'young at heart' but Evelyn Roach really cares about young people. Whatever the reason, she does care and is concerned about the future of our youth.

We're mighty glad you came to Appomattox! Evelyn Roach, you are quite a gal!!

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